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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HEARING ON EAST TIMOR
23 APRIL, 1992

TESTIMONY
OF
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I would like to thank the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights for arranging this forum and inviting me to speak.

I was in East Timor last year for three weeks. On November 12th I witnessed the brutal massacre of defenceless East Timorese by the Indonesian armed forces at the Santa Cruz cemetery.

On the morning of November 12th I attended a mass with thousands of East Timorese commemerating the death of Sebastio Gomez who was shot by Indonesian soldiers two weeks earlier.

After the mass the mourners moved to the street. Unfurling banners and with shouts of " Viva Timor Leste ", Viva Independence and Viva Xanana " the crowd moved through the streets of Dili to the Santa Cruz cemetery. Although the crowd was bold and voicestress the march was orderly.

Upon reaching the cemetery the march had swelled to about 5,000. Being joined by people from their workplace, schools and home. Soldiers along the route had kept a low profile but while the mourners organized themselves to lay flowers and say prayers at Sebastio's grave, Indonesian military arrived in trucks and soldier's, in formation, began marching down the street.

By this stage about 3,000 people had moved away. There was still 1,000 infront of the cemetry and approximately 500 inside as the soldiers became more obvious. The position of the foreigners at this time, were the two Englishmen, Stephen Cox and Max Stahl inside the cemetery, the two Americans, Amy Goodman and Alan Nairn moved forward to the street-corner. I was standing at the front of the crowd but moved towards the back and joined Bob Muntz the other Australian.

The whole time I stood amongst the crowd I saw no physical provocation from the crowd. NO sticks or stones thrown. No knifes or machettees brandished. There had been a distance of at least 80 meters from the soldiers and the East Timorese. The crowd was utterly defenceless and showed no threat of any kind. It is a downright lie that the Indonesian soldiers lives or weapons were threatened, as reported by the Indonesian Investigation Team.

From the positions I stood I heard no warning shot or command to disperse. There was none.

I was watching the helmuts of the military that had positioned themselves in a front line, bobbing up and down, jogging or

marching towards the crowd. The crowd began to walk backwards, walk away some were already running.

Suddenly a few shots rang out, continued by an explosive volly of automatic rifle fire that persisted for 2 to 3 minutes. It sounded like the whole fifteen in the front row had their fingers pressed firmly on the trigger. The Indonesian soldiers were firing directly into the crowd.

I ran like everbody else. I realised I would be shot in the back if a bullet lodged into my body. Most people, especially in that initial burst of fire would have been shot in the back running away.

Amy Goodman and Alan Nairn had observed hundreds of soldiers march down the street. According to their testimony the military: " rounded the corner and without breaking stride they raised there rifles to their shoulders and opened fire ".

As the soldiers were shooting and began leaping bodies to hunt down those still standing. Amy and Alan also became a target. They recieved a beating with fists, boots and rifle butts that gave Alan a fractured skull and sent him into contractions. The soldiers put M-16's at their heads and shouted at them " Politieks, Politieks ". Amy thought they were going to be executed. Holding up their passports and saying we are Americans could have been the deciding factor between life or death. An opportunity none of the East Timorese have. A non-military medical jeep drove up and was able to carry them away to safety.

Stephen Cox and Max Stahl were trapped like hundreds of other East Timorese inside the high walled cemetery as the soldiers surrounded and fired into the confined area. The following half hour Stephen remained trapped in a crypt and saw people drag themselves in, splattered in blood, dying and mortally wounded. Young girls with blood pouring from their heads. Old women full of terror. The crypt became crowded with people expecting to die.

Bob Muntz and I followed the rivers of people that ran through the housing area. Not far away, about 50 meters, shots rang out and other shots further away. The soldiers were chasing us, firing through the houses.

Nothing was spontaneous about the killings. The soldiers, commanded by plain cloths officers with walkie talkies, systematicaly searched the cemetery and surroundings. The shooting, beating and stabbing continued for at least half an hour.

When Stephen Cox was discovered he was kicked, beaten, had bayonets thrust in his face and had guns put to his head. It was through the intervention of a plain cloths officer that Stephen managed to survive. Pulling him away the officer screamed: " I have saved your life ". Stephen saw bodies being pulled along by the legs and arms as soldiers hoisted bodies onto trucks.

The few eyewitness accounts by the East Timorese that have been able to get out of the country have not been received with the same integrity as the foreign eyewitness's reports. But their testimony helps broaden and clarify events.

From a Timorese witness.

> " Hino army vechiles arrived.(A Hino vechile is the size of a cattle truck) The front of the Santa Cruz cemete2ry was covered with bodies. The bodies were loaded onto the trucks. The bodies were dragged out, then two men took hold of them, swung them, and threw them onto the trucks. Another two up on the trucks arranged the bodies with their feet, to make more space.
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> The bodies continued to come, dragged by two soldiers. They were being brought out of the cemetery or were dragged across plots of land on two sides of the cemetery.
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> By 9.15, at least three Hino trucks had driven off from Santa Cruz cemetry, carrying bodies, piled on top of each other, like sacks of sand ".

From Manuel Carrascalao (member of the Regional Assembly) and the older brother of the Governor of East Timor also gave testimony to the Indonesian Investigation Team describing the loading of bodies onto a truck and two standing nearby. Mr Carrascalao went on to say:

> " Those who were arrested were dealt with very harshly. I happened to see one person who had probably fainted, but as soon as these fellows saw his head move, they immediately struck him with a stone. Someone else I saw was still alive, on the truck full of corpses; then a fellow dragged him off and struck him on the head. After that he was loaded onto the truck again ".

The way that people were treated in hospital afterwards could be drawn from the treatment that the foreigner Kamal BamadhaJ received and from an East Timorese eyewitness account:

> " Kamal was also standing amongst the crowd when the soldiers opened fire. He was found bleeding profusely on the side of the road. Although Kamal was driven in a clearly marked Red Cross vehicle he was held up by military roadblocks for al least 20 minutes. The delay was fatal.

From a young demonstrater that was interviewed by the Indonesian Investigation Team and published in "Jakarta Jakarta", an Indonesian newspaper. (It's interesting to note that three journalists were sacked after this publication.)

> " I was tortured in the cemetery. Then I was taken to an office and they beat me again there. I was taken away in a truck with 25 friends. On the

journey, I occasionally lost consciousness because my head was bleeding. I was only at that office for about three hours because I was severly wounded and was taken to the military hospital. There were many other victims there, and there was blood everywhere. There were buckets full of water mixed with blood; the water had been used to wash the wounded and the dead. One of these fellows ordered me and some others to drink the water in the buckets. They pushed our heads down into the buckets and told us to drink straight from the buckets. When we refused to do so, they struck us with their weapons. We were all still naked, including three injured women and one who had been shot in the thigh.

We weren't given any medication at the hospital; on the contrary, we were again tortured. Then they took us back to the same office, where we were held for a day, then released....".

The correct figure of people killed at the Santa Cruz cemetery will only ever be known when an impartial investigation were able to be freely carried out. Bishop Belo in an Asia Watch report on December 12th, estimated that 180 people were killed. While the Governor of East Timor, Mr Carrascalao said the figure was much higher than 100.

Upon arriving in East Timor, three weeks before the massacre, Saskia and I witnessed what could only be described as a military occupied country where many people feared daily for their well-being and lives.
Saskia who was able to speak with East Timorese, saw a 16 year old boy who had a deep incision across his left ear from a razor blade. One of his friends had received the same treatment after they were picked up by the military in the dead of the night. They had pulled his ear forward and made a deep cut at the back where it joins the head.
The priest with whom Saskia spoke shortly afterwards tried to assure her that this happens frequently - arrests without reason, intimidation, torture, death threats and disappearences.

The week previously Saskia had seen a young man in hiding who was:

" Convinced that the murder of Sebastion was part of a clean-up action by the Indonesian military in preparation for the arrival of the international delegation. He was convinced that it was just a matter of time before he - and hundreds of others in similar situations - would be picked up by the military - tortured and murdered. They want to murder all of us " .

Mass graves had been dug in several places around the country. All East Timorese had to attend meetings in the workplace, school or marketplace and were informed that if they attempted to talk to the Portuguese parliamentary delegation they would be buried in these grave sites.

While traveling around East Timor, we were stopped at military checkpoints outside Dili and were questioned by police and/or military in every town or village we stopped.
We saw armed military on marketplaces, quiet mountain roads and in the smallest village.

With quite some trouble we were able to leave Dili the day after the massacre. One message kept ringing in my head: every time we met with East Timorese, they begged us to tell the world of their suffering. Since we left there has been a stream of stories about mass executions, arrests, torture and disapperances.

Mr Shultz an Australian based journalist visited East Timor after Nov-12th. Villagers reported to Mr Shultz the movements of army vechiles on the night of the massacre:

> " The slow moving convoy consisted of nine trucks followed by two bulldozers. Seven trucks carried corpes. Witnesses had insisted there were live prisoners taken. As they passed by village huts, prisoners were quoted as screaming in Portuguese: " It is for our country that we die ".

A 25 year old Timorese new in Australia spoke of a big crackdown beginning two days after the massacre;

> " Many who were injured (on Nov-12th) were afraid to go to the hospital and a lot died from their wounds. I helped bury some of the victims myself, in backyards in Dili, about 22, who died in the massacre or from their wounds. The post massacre crackdown followed an established pattern - troops at night, in uniform wearing " Ninja " masks going from house to house ".

From other eyewitness reports;

> " On the night of the 13th and 14th of November, some covered armoured personnel carriers (Unimogs) pulled up near a ward were some of the wounded were lying. Suddenly, all the lights went out, also in the city. In the wards and in the unimogs there were cries of pain. Then the unimogs departed.

> On november 14th four boys and three girls were reported murdered in Fatu-ahi.

> On November 15th, Amnesty International received unconfirmed reports that between 60 and 80 more people were executed. They were reportedly taken to the edge of newly-dug ditches and shot with automatic weapons. Also on November 15th five young people were murdered in a place called Kai-Koli,in Dili. The bodies had been cut into pieces and stacked into five bags and thrown into

the water. Witnesses reported this to the Internatioal Red Cross delegate.

On November 27th nine youths were killed and their bodies carried to Hera.

On November 30th, Indonesian military Police cut off the ears of a 19 year old because he did not have an identity card ".

Mr Carrascalao, the governor of East Timor also called for an inquiry into reports of large -scale executions by the army soon after the shooting on Nov-12th.

It is at a time that Indonesia claims improvement of the military attitude and the few visitors to East Timor continue to report of a worsening situation that this post massacre reports remain unconfirmed.

What happened after we left East Timor, we of course don't know. It is exactly this fact of not knowing that clearly describes what the situation is like in East Timor. It is this situation that is described by two Australians University lectures, Marcia Langton and Sister Veronica Brady when they visited East Timor, in January:

" We were advised by a Catholic priest not to talk with anyone. Anyone seen talking with us would be arrested... (and the) terror they felt there amongst the population bears no relationship to the Indonesian claims of improvement ".

Amnesty International reported that despite restrictions on communications with East Timor, recent reports indicate that military intimidation has intensified since the Santa Cruz massacre and that an atomsphere of fear and apprehension prevails in Dili. Local security forces appear to have used the 12 November massacre as an opportunity for intimidating and imprisoning suspected opponents of the Indonesian rule in East Timor.

The last Jakarta-based journalist to visit East Timor before it was closed to foreign press in February, freelancer Peter Goodman, reported:

" Dili is dominated by fear.. (and has) the air of a city under siege ".

A recent report released, 13th April, by the Australian Associated Press told of an Australian woman who has visited East Timor three times, most recently in March:

" As far as I'm concerned, the situation was absolutely horrible, two weeks ago ".

Her account was confirmed by five others who visited East Timor since November 12th, as well as a Timorese who says he - survived the massacre, and other sources interviewed by AAP.

Dennis Shultz an Australian journalist did manage to receive a surat jalan and enter East Timor in March. Mr Shultz managed to stay for one and a half days before he was searched, interrogated, any film or notes confiscated and flown out of East Timor. However, he did manage to speak with people. The same eerie report is echoed again whilst I was in Dili. A young man told Mr Shultz:

" The Indonesians are trying to wipe us out one by one ".

This mans fears were highlighted when during the only night that Mr Shultz stayed in Dili, at 3 am an estimated 80 members of the Indonesian army's crack red beret unit surrounded a house and arrested the four teenagers sleeping inside. The four were suspected of being present at the Santa Cruz cemetery on November the 12th.

As part of the preparations to deal with the expected arrival of the Lusitania Expresso, Mr Shultz was told the Indonesian military had began a systimatic removal of young East Timorese whom they suspected would continue to embarrass them internationally. Shultz's informant said;

> " They have taken so many people that everyone knows some people who have been taken. They arrested them without any belongings to two towns in the southern Same district, Betano and Viqueque. After they go we don't know what happens to them or if they will ever come back ".

Again Shultz heard a horendous story, like so many of the unconfirmed accounts, that a Timorese teacher found a plastic bag at the roadside containing the bodies of two young people who did not make it home before dark.

Two people from Darwin, Martin Day and a companion intended to go to East Timor for a holiday on the 22nd of March. However they were stopped by Indonesian military, on the West Timor boarder . Back in Kupang they inquired how soon they would be allowed to visit East Timor and were told " Maybe in a few months or more when things settle down ".

East Timor is now closed, like three and a half years ago, apart from the few selective tourists who pass the scrutiny of the military examination. Indonesian agreed, in the Human Rights Commission this year, to allow more Human Rights organizations into the country. But now even tourists may not enter. While East Timor is closed off we should reflect back to the armed forces commander-in-chief, General Try Sutrisno's earlier statements;

" Once the investigation mission is completed we will wipe out all seperatist elements ".

Ironically the investigation report is finished and remains in the hands of Suharto.

To understand what is happening in East Timor we can read the words of the new military commander of East Timor, Theo

Syafei. General Syafei replaced General Warrouw who in the past had taken a " soft approach ". Syafei however said:

> " Our love was taken as being a sign of indecision and weakness ". Syafei is now " restoring ABRI (Indonesian military) standards". and that " Demonstrations don't exist according to Indonesian law ".

When Shafei was asked by a journalist about the Santa Cruz killings, he replied;

> " If something similar to the 12 November event were to happen under my leadership, the number of victims would probably be higher ". [EDITOR ,14 March,92]

I have learned since I returned, by speaking to East Timorese refugees that what I'm telling you is nothing new. These exact type of human rights abuses have been continually reported throughout the 16 years of Indonesia occupation. It is a country where, 200,000 East Timorese have lost their lives, during Indonesian occupation, 1/3 of the population.It seems to me we have to start treasuring these reports, like the ones mentioned above.

Since the 12th of November I have given testimony in public forums, parliamentary hearings and the United Nations Human Rights Commission. What is becoming clear to me is that we can go on talking about human rights abuses until we're blue in the face. While parliamentarians and the world are busy informing themselves about human rights abuses absolutely nothing has improved for the East Timorese, on the contrary.

Self-Determination is one of the basic human rights. The Timorese should have the possibility to express their own will. It is not a matter of starting from scratch: there are United Nations resolutions in place. It's a case of implementing what is already there.

The intergration of East Timor into the 27th province of Indonesia has not been successful. The feeling now amongst the East Timorese is clear and has even been admitted by the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr Gareth Evans, that the majority of East Timorese are not happy under Indonesian rule. The violence, deaths and intimidation will only continue until the fundamental right of the East Timorese is recognised. On November 12th I saw the fear on the faces of the East Timorese both young and old. I also saw a joy of being able to voice their opinion in public. None of the banners they carried were calling for better wages, more jobs or more foreign aid. Those banners were the voice of Self Determination and Independence.